

This is the final bulletin insert in a series as we focus on aspects of our church and the Mass as part of our *Celebrate the Sacraments...* A New Beginning for the Family campaign.

CELEBRATE  
the Sacraments...  
A NEW  
Beginning  
FOR THE FAMILY  
A Campaign for St. Mary Catholic Parish



## PRESIDERS' CHAIRS

This week we conclude our series with the chairs used by the priest and deacon.

It is important to keep in mind that the priest who celebrates Mass and the deacon who assists him are ministers, meaning that their primary function is one of service to God's people.

One of the greatest joys of any priest's or deacon's life is to celebrate or assist at Mass, where Christ visits His people and becomes one with them during the reception of Holy Communion.

Because of the priest's unique ordination and responsibility to act *in persona Christi* or "in the person of Christ" while celebrating the sacraments, the chair reserved for the presider at Mass is usually of a slightly different shape and style than those reserved for the deacon, lectors, altar servers, etc. This is not to draw attention to the priest himself, but to acknowledge that, if we are to participate in the Mass closely and reverently, we should pay attention to his ritual actions. The focus of the liturgical "drama" is not the priest, but his movements and prayers *do* draw us upwards to the focus of our worship—God.

In many parishes, the material used to make the presiders' chairs is like that used in making the ambo and altar, again drawing a link between the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the ministers who perform them. These chairs are not ornate or bombastic, but simply designed to help the congregation recognize these celebrants (as opposed to confusing them with lectors, altar servers, and the like).

In a cathedral, the bishop's chair is of particular importance. It usually displays his coat of arms and has a canopy extended over it. The word *cathedral* literally means "place of the chair," though this is not to say that the chair itself is somehow important! Rather, the bishop's chair is a symbol of his responsibility to teach his flock. This points all the way back to the Book of Exodus and the seat or chair from which Moses would interpret God's word for the people of Israel during their wandering through the desert.

Today, the chair from which Peter the Apostle taught the early Christians is on display in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. Enclosed in an ornate reliquary designed by Bernini, the actual relic itself is made of simple oak. In 2012, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said that Peter's chair is "...a symbol of the special mission of Peter and his Successors to tend Christ's flock, keeping it united in faith and in charity."

In this way, we might think of the bishop's chair at least a little bit like the chair a teacher or librarian might use. We have all seen a class of children, crowding close to the teacher's chair as he or she reads an important story or communicates an important truth to the class. The Hebrews gathered around their rabbis in such a way, and the early Christians did the same with their bishops.

As we look to our upcoming capital campaign and renovation of our church, I hope this entire series describing the various elements of our church interior has been helpful to you. The entire series is located on our website archived as a single PDF. May God bless our community while we embark on this campaign in 2018!